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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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|--------------------|--|----------|----------------------------|
| Property Address:  | <b>7<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE<br/>(Hine Junior High School site)</b> | <b>X</b> | Agenda<br>Consent Calendar |
| Landmark/District: | <b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>  | <b>X</b> | Concept Review             |
| Meeting Date:      | <b>June 30, 2011</b>   |          | Alteration                 |
| H.P.A. Number:     | <b>11-195</b>  | <b>X</b> | New Construction           |
| Staff Reviewer:    | <b>Amanda Molson, Steve Callcott</b>   |          | Demolition                 |
|                    |  | <b>X</b> | Subdivision                |

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Stanton-Eastbanc LLC, represented by architect Amy Weinstein, seeks on-going conceptual review for redevelopment of the Hine Junior High School site in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The project was first reviewed in April; after hearing several hours of community comments, the Board approved the site plan and general architectural direction; while no specific action was taken on the proposed height and mass, a number of comments and suggestions were offered for consideration as the project continued to be refined.

The elements of the project resubmitted for review this month include the 8<sup>th</sup> Street residential building, the corner residential building at 8<sup>th</sup> and D (which, while articulated as if a separate building, is interconnected to the 8<sup>th</sup> Street row), the corner office building at Pennsylvania and 7<sup>th</sup> and the office building on 7<sup>th</sup> Street (also articulated as two separate buildings but interconnected). The two residential buildings on C Street and the design of the plaza will be presented at a later date. A summary of the changes is outlined below with suggestions for further development offered in italics.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Street residential building**

While not fundamentally different in terms of its height and mass, the architectural direction of the 8<sup>th</sup> Street residential building has been rethought. Rather than being expressed as a series of rowhouses of different heights and styles – which some Board members felt suggested an artificial sense of historical development – the building has been designed with a more uniform stylistic expression. The building takes its cues from late 19<sup>th</sup> century development patterns when a single developer/architect would construct entire unified blocks at a time, but with variety introduced through different rooflines, bay shapes, and architectural detailing.

The palette of the revised proposal is based on the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque Revival, with dark red brick, brownstone, brick patterning, and shaped slate roofs. The entrances of the individual units have been relocated to grade, eliminating the spindly exterior stairs that extended to the second floors, which were too tall and projected too far to be convincing. The roofs would be animated with steep slate mansards, shed dormers, and tower elements; the fifth floor, set back 30 feet from the facades, would also be clad in slate. The five-story entrance element (and a similar five story element on C Street) would be expressed as slightly contrasting book-ends in a palette of purple brick and stone trim with prominent rounded oriel bays.

The revised scheme still employs a rowhouse rhythm, scale and level of detailing that closely relates to the historic district while more honestly expressing itself as a single building campaign. One of the issues discussed in the previous scheme was the need to provide further differentiation in the roof heights for the different “rowhouses.” However, with the change in architectural direction, and the variety of roof treatments within the new vocabulary, artificially stepping the heights up and down no longer seems necessary or consistent with the revised concept.

*As the design continues to be developed, the entrances should be given greater prominence and distinction, the fenestration should be refined with the goal of introducing some additional variety, and the site plan for the public space front yards developed. The use of rounded bay elements on several of the buildings helps break up the rectilinear character of the row; the use of additional curvilinear and non-rectilinear elements – windows, dormers, oriels, ironwork – should be explored.*

### **8<sup>th</sup> & D residential building**

The 8<sup>th</sup> and D residential building has been redesigned in an effort to address concerns about its height and design. While still based on the same idea (a contemporary interpretation of the panelized brick and two-over-two windows common in Victorian architecture), changes have been made to try to relate the building more closely to the Capitol Hill Historic District. The top floor has been recessed, the parapet wall lowered to railing height, four-story projecting bays added, the fenestration regularized into a more coherent pattern, and the ground-level redesigned.

The changes have improved its compatibility. The recessed top floor and lower parapet have the effect of reducing the building’s apparent height by a floor. The façade has a more apparent tripartite organization, with the base, middle and top characteristic of historic buildings throughout the district. The bay projections simultaneously serve to ground the building, break down its mass, and introduce a familiar rhythm to the building and its streetscape.

*As the building continues to be developed, further evaluation should be given to the materials and coloration, perhaps to include additional color or contrast to the brick work. The pattern of fenestration has benefited from being regularized, but perhaps should be further rationalized, particularly in the tower element. The 8<sup>th</sup> Street elevation should be developed with comparable fenestration in the bay as the D Street elevation so that it doesn’t read as the back of the building.*

### **Pennsylvania Avenue office building**

While the Board took no formal action in April on the proposed height and mass, a consensus emerged that the top of the building – the height, roofline, and penthouse – needed further work. No specific direction was given to remove entire floors, however, the applicant was directed to look reductions in height, the use of setbacks, and other ways that the design could be modified to decrease the building’s apparent height. In response, the revised proposal calls for the seventh floor to be set back 12 feet from the east, west and south elevations, the height has been reduced by several feet, and a narrow slate cap introduced on the top floor to provide it with a more

definitive top. The penthouse has also been reduced in size, shifted further back from Pennsylvania Avenue, and designed as a slightly canted roof feature clad in slate. The twisted brick armature wall surface has been reordered with a slightly lower base, thicker proportions and a reduced height top floor to provide greater weight and solidity. The top floor projection of the armature has been eliminated on Pennsylvania Avenue and the projection above the sixth floor on 7<sup>th</sup> Street has been made more prominent with a slight projection out from the building face. The underlying glass curtain wall has been revised to include precast and slate supporting the glass (rather than metal panels), and with a quieter, more staid pattern of vertically-oriented windows and transoms. The entrance element, recessed from the street wall, would be clad in slabs of slate.

*While the proportions of the building's base have been improved, further study should be given to providing greater "weight" to the first floor, such as with solid bases to the storefronts, and the use of storefront projections and/or awnings that would provide a three-dimensional character to the building at the pedestrian level. Elimination of the public roof deck should also be studied; if removing this feature would negate the need for the elevators and second stair coming up to the roof, the penthouse could be substantially reduced in size and pulled further back from Pennsylvania Avenue.*

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Street office building**

The 7th Street frontage of the office building, which was not substantively designed or discussed in April, has been developed as a differentiated companion element to the corner building. As before, it would house the loading entrance set back from the street and the mass would be broken down into smaller scaled elements that step down in size toward the street and as the building extends to the north. The new architectural vocabulary is based on Victorian commercial buildings, with punched window openings set in a purplish-red brick façade with complementing precast trim elements.

*Copies of color renderings can be imprecise in conveying the true intent of a proposal, but like the 8<sup>th</sup> and D residential building the material coloration of this building should continue to be studied; as rendered, it looks a little grim and foreboding. The design and setback of the seventh floor should also be reevaluated. The elevation up to the sixth floor – composed of two primary six-story blocks and three-story bays – is strong, well-composed and consistent in spirit with the straightforward Victorian commercial buildings on which the elevation is based. However, the seventh floor, composed in the same architectural vocabulary, is neither sufficiently set back to disappear nor really engaged in the façade. When viewed in perspective ("View South on 7<sup>th</sup> Street on A-21), it creates a fussy "wedding cake" profile that is not consistent with the way in which buildings are massed in the historic district. Alternative setbacks and architectural treatments should be explored.*

#### **Recommendations**

The HPO recommends that the applicants evaluate the recommendations outlined above and return to the Board for further review when appropriate.